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ABSTRACT

This paper examines research concerned with the definition, development, and effects of curriculum. Ten aspects of current curriculum scholarship are examined. The first three (the state of the field, the scope of the field, and the revolt against scientism and rationality) concern curriculum study as a whole. Despite the assessment that the field of curriculum research is dying (Schawb, 1969; Heubner, 1976), the author contends that two scholarly journals, "Journal of Curriculum Studies" and "Curriculum Network," are signs of current vigor. However, the scope of the field may be too broad and may suffer from lack of focus. Recently, 19 types of studies which may be considered as curriculum research have been identified (Posner, 1976). Debates concerning the definition of terms and clarification of concepts also exist. The current revolt against rationality and empiricism is aimed at social scientists who use the behavior of human beings as objects of study. The author points out that the object of curriculum research is to be as rational as possible in investigating how various factors manifest themselves and interact in curriculum studies. Historical and comparative studies, an analysis of "educational language," and new philosophical approaches are reviewed. The author concludes that although scholarly activity in the field is diverse, little in the way of a validated knowledge base for curriculum selection and organization exists. (KC)

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REVIEW OF RESEARCH IN CURRICULUM

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There are three distinct worlds of which curriculum is a feature. One is the world of educational practice, where decisions are taken resulting in certain intentions, which when refined and organized are used to guide instruction. Then there is a world of ideology, in which causes are advanced through advocacy, debate, and persuasion in behalf of particular views regarding appropriate curriculum content and structure. Finally, there is the world of theory, in which curriculum is an object of study and research. It is with this last context only--the field of curriculum scholarship--that this review is concerned.

It is not the province of a review of research to report recent developments in curriculum--they belong in the world of practice. Nor is such a review an occasion for promoting particular curricular changes--that is an ideological enterprise. Curriculum research is concerned with increasing our understanding of curriculum, its development, and its effects. It encompasses all scholarly activities in which curriculum or curriculum development is either an independent or a dependent variable. These activities are extremely varied, some involving empirical data, but most not.

In the time available, it is possible to call attention to only a few of the features of current curriculum scholarship. There are ten which seem particularly significant. I will enumerate them all first and then comment briefly on each. They are:

1. Pre-occupation with the state of the field
2. Debate over the scope of the field
3. Revolt against scientism and rationality
4. A growing historical orientation
5. A beginning comparative interest
6. A declining interest in linguistic analysis
7. The emergence of new philosophical approaches
8. Increasing attention to frame factors
9. More sophisticated analyses of the curriculum development process
10. Continuing, but minimal, concern with curriculum structure

Because the first three features refer to the field as a whole, I will discuss these at somewhat greater length than the other seven. As few studies will be mentioned for purposes of illustration, but the number cited for a given feature bears no relationship to the amount of activity under that heading, nor are those included to be considered the best or more important.

1. State of the field. Eight years ago, Joseph Schawb (1969) characterized the field of curriculum as moribund. Last year, Dwayne Heubner (1976) of Columbia University issued the more ominous pronouncement that the field is in fact dead. In between, several others have commented gloomily about its health.

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Despite the handwringing, however, a fairly good case can be made for the optimistic assessment that the curriculum field is more vigorous and popular than at any time in the sixty years since curriculum and its development first attracted serious interest. As to its popularity, one can point to the numerous scholars working on topics having little, if anything, to do with curriculum who are incensed at the suggestion that they are not doing curriculum research. It is apparently a good thing these days to be able to claim to be in the curriculum field.

One sign on the current vigor of the field is that it now has two refereed scholarly journals, both less than ten years old and both international in character, the Journal of Curriculum Studies having originated in England, and Curriculum Inquiry, successor to Curriculum Theory Network, being edited in Canada. The contents of these two journals represent a level of scholarship that was relatively rare in the field's first forty years and that is difficult to reconcile with the reports of its demise.

On the other hand, what one observer considers indicative of vigor may for another be evidence of morbidity. For Schwab the most conspicuous symptom underyling his gloomy diagnosis was precisely the theoretic discourse among scholars which is found in such journals. It was this kind of theoretical and meta-theoretical discourse that prompted him to issue his ironic prescription that curriculum scholars adopt a "language of the practical." The irony lies in the fact that it was Schwab's own earlier (1964a; 1964b) writings on the structure of the disciplines that were as responsible as any for elevating the discourse on curriculum to a more theoretical plane in the first place.

There is a further irony, however, in that Schwab's plea for the language of the practical has provided curriculum scholars with still another topic on which to write for each other, namely, in inadequacies of Schwab's conception of the practical. Moreover, the critique is frequently cast in the theoretic language of the currently, modish continental philosophies, a language which seems arcane to those of us who (like Schwab) have been schooled in the unidimensional "North American empirical-analytic-technical-positivistic-nomothetic" social science (VanManen, 1977). The underlying basis for the critique has, however, been lucidly explained from the vantage point of the sociology of knowledge by Michael Apple and Nancy King. As scholars they explain the relationship between ideology and school knowledge instead of promoting an ideology.

2. Scope of the field. George Posner of Cornell has recently (1976) identified 19 types of studies which might be considered curriculum research, though not necessarily by himself or even by the researchers themselves. These 19 categories are defined by the form of question which is asked and further delineated by the object to which the question refers. As Posner points out, the questions are extremely diverse, and which ones are accepted as curriculum research depends on one's conception of research. Similarly, the objects of the questions represent a wide range of educational phenomena, and which are appropriate to curriculum research depends on one's conception of curriculum.

One of the themes of recent scholarship relating to curriculum concerns the definition of terms and clarification of concepts. The debate bears on the meaning of curriculum and curriculum development as aspects of educational practice and on the dimensions and health of the field of curriculum as an area of study. And within each of these contexts, there is a debate within a debate. While one concern which definitions should prevail, the other deals with whether agreement on definition is necessary or possible, or even desirable. Underlying both debates seems to be a basic disagreement concerning the relative merits, for the purpose of advancing educational scholarship and practice, of focus and identity,

on the other hand, and comprehensiveness and diversity, on the other.

A somewhat similar dichotomy is represented by the two prinicipal organizations with curriculum as a major interest--ASCD, which not only brings practitioners and scholars together but also amalgamates curriculum development and instructional supervision, and Division B of AERA, in which scholars predominate and curriculum is distinguished from instruction, the latter being a concern of Division C. The dichotomy is also evident within AERA, however, both in the recurrent dispute about limiting membership to active researchers and in the pressure (and reluctance) to add new divisions and special interest groups.

On the question of how broad a range of phenomena we should admit under the rubric of curriculum, I find myself in agreement with Huebner (1976) (or him in agreement with me, at last) that the field has suffered from an "increasing diversity of interest ...(which) could no longer be held together by a single focus" and that to recapture unity or integrity it must "cast off some interests that are now autonomous," restricting itself to "identifying educational content and finding ways to make it available to (learners)." There is, of course, as Straumanis (1976) has cautioned, the further obligation to "provide good reasons" for content choices, but, it should be clear that by limiting the concern of the curriculum field to the selection, organization, and justification of <u>what</u> we teach, i.e., our intentions regarding the outcomes of the processes of learning and development, we do not in any sense claim these concerns to be more important than <u>how</u> we teach. Instructional studies, dealing with the effects of various learning experiences, may in fact be far more important, but excluding from curriculum research those instructional studies in which outcome intentions are not among the independent variables still leaves a variety of topics for study by a variety of approaches.

3. <u>Revolt against scientism and rationality</u>. There are so many cross-currents within curriculum scholarship today that it would be simplistic to reduce them all to a single underlying controversy. But certainly prominent among the diverse themes is a rejection of scientism and its associated technological-industrial conception of education as a rational enterprise in which efficient production is a prime desideratum. In blunt terms, it is a revolt against the excessive influence of the psychologists and other social scientists who, because they make human beings and their behavior objects of study with a view to arriving at causal generalizations for the ultimate purpose of achieving predictability, are accused of increasing the control which those with sufficient power can exercise over other human beings, who collectively are then termed the "oppressed."

In its milder manifestations this revolt resembles the efforts of Persig's protagonist in <u>Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance</u> to temper the classic analytical mentality with the romantic imaginative orientation. In this form, the rebellion is pressed by advocates of "humanistic" education, including some within the field of psychology itself who call themselves "humanistic psychologists." A more extremist position, however, is more concerned with furthering a particular political-social ideology than with promoting the affective domain.

The platforms of the more moderate revisionist historians and radical philosophers and social scientists merely call for greater politicization of the curriculum as did the liberal social reconstructionists of forty years ago. The writings of the more revolutionary critics, however, advocate abolition of the curriculum entirely, at least in the sense of any specificity of institutional intentions as to what students are to learn, and some would abolish the institution

of schooling itself. Whether the latter can be considered curriculum scholars when they stand for the elimination of that which such scholars study seems questionable.

Except for the recent willingness to destroy the system rather than attempt to improve it, there is nothing new about curriculum scholars' being more eager to tell practitioners and the public what the curriculum should include; or how it should be organized or developed, than to add to our understanding of these matters. The fads and cults of the past half century are familiar to us all, more familiar than any significant instances or traditions of curriculum research, other than Bobbitt's and Charter's activity analyses and the Eight-year Study. Advocacy comes more natural to most of us than scholarship does.

In his article on the credibility crisis in education appearing in the current (October, 1977) issue of Phi Delta Kappan, Harry Broudy attributes confidence in a system to faith in its rationality and faith in the "competence and moral integrity of its personnel." There must be faith in all levels of the system, from the philosophy of the highest policy makers through the various levels of scholarship, system design and policy, the development and application of technology, and finally the performance of routines and specific procedures. All of these levels are equally necessary and important, but it does no good to confuse the scholarship function with the other five. Moreover, while curriculum development is clearly in part a political process, involving power, influence, and outvoting, and the resulting curriculum is obviously highly value-laden, this does not mean that rationality is, or can be, irrelevant to the process. Curriculum research, though itself not free of other value influences and political considerations, is nothing if not an effort to be as rational as possible in investigating how political and processes, value hierarchies, and rationality manifest themselves and interact in curriculum determination.

4. Historical studies. In 1969 the Review of Educational Research included for the first time, I believe, a review of historical studies relating to curriculum. Since that review by Bellack (1969), an increasing amount of historical scholarship has taken place in the field. This has ranged from studies of the work of particular people, such as Franklin Bobbitt (Kliebard, 1975) to re-examination of the context and influence of specific documents, such as the 1926 N.S.S.E. Yearbook (Walker, 1975), and "Essentialist Manifesto" of 40 years ago (Grauls, 1974), and the "Tyler Rationale" after 25 years (Kliebard, 1970). We have much to learn from past battles and much to lose by conducting our research in ignorance of our history.

5. Comparative interests. The counterpart of the historical approach in the spatial dimension is represented by comparative studies of curriculum and its determination in different states and countries. Such studies offer an opportunity to escape a cultural context that we are unable to manipulate and thereby learn which curriculum problems and solutions are culture-dependent and which are universal. Little work of this sort has been done, but some basis for it has been provided by the data assembled by the Beauchamps (1972) and by Philip Taylor of Birmingham University and myself (1974). The existence now of two international journals provides us with some data for implicit comparisons. Additional comparative data come to us as a by-product of establishing the cirricular validity of instruments used in the International Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in this country.

One IEA finding, which seems obvious but seems also to have been surrounded by some doubt, is that children know more about a subject in countries where the

subject is taught and even more where it is emphasized. This finding relates to Carroll's (1963) stress on time for learning and to Wiley and Harnischfeger's more recent (1973; 1976) investigations of the time variable. If it appears to indicate that what is taught is more important than how it is taught, we need to remind ourselves that the variance among teaching methods is sharply curtailed by the admirable tendency of responsible professionals to limit themselves to sensible procedures with high probabilities of effectiveness. As Walker and Schaffarzick (1974) found, "... the additional benefits to be gained from improving the presentation beyond the standard in current use are not in general likely to yield results commensurate with the benefits of including the (curricular) item in the unimproved version."

6. Decline in analysis. As applied to educational language and concepts generally by Scheffler (1960), Smith and Ennis (1961), and others, linguistic analysis has given us useful clarifications of many terms pertaining to curriculum, although the insights provided by such analyses as Komisar's (1961) on "needs" and Henderson's (1961) on subject matter seem largely to have been ignored. While interest in analysis on the part of philosophers appears to be waning, Vallance (1973) and Martin (1976) have recently analyzed that language of justification associated with the loose notion of a "hidden" curriculum. Since outcome intentions must be expressed in language in order to be shared, the language we use in stating curriculum and educational goals may be more critical than we have realized. One of the by-products coming out of a current study by Joan Segall at Albany, investigating sex as a factor in the rating of educational goals, is the finding, from factor analysis, that many of the macro-goals promulgated by the New York State Board of Regents may be stated in language that does not accurately reflect the subsumed sub-goals or that is too vague to permit uniform interpretation.

7. New philosophical approaches. Increasingly, reference is made in the literature to the potential of hermeneutics as a tool for curriculum scholarship. Developed in Germany early in this century from the long-established theological practical of Biblical exegesis, the hermenuetical method is still employed primarily by German philosophers. American curriculum scholars seem to discuss the method more than they apply it, but since it aims at interpretive explanation of texts in the light of the context in which they were written, it would seem to hold considerable promise for the study of curriculum. Unfortunately, no good examples can be given.

Two other philosophical approaches which have recently captured the interest of some curriculum scholars are phenomenology and Critical Theory, neither of which, regrettably, I can claim to understand. One or both, however, apparently underlies the work of a group of curriculum theorists known as the "reconceptualists." William Pinar of the University of Rochester, an influential leader of this group, has edited a collection of papers from one of their annual conferences (Pinar, 1975), one of his own contributions being the method he calls "currere." I hope I do not do it (and him) too great an injustice by describing it as an approach which seeks primarily to evoke the inner experience of students as they encounter curriculum and of educators as they develop it.

8. Frame factors: The effects of frame factors generally have been of particular interest to Swedish curriculum researchers, Kallos (1974) has provided a useful analysis of both remote and proximal factors, each of which requires much further study to determine precisely by what mechanisms it exerts its influence on

curriculum. Through empirical process analysis, Lundgren (1972) investigated the way in which teachers revise their outcome intentions in the face of various constraints arising in instruction. In these times, studies are also needed of how curriculum is affected by reduction in economic resources and changing qualitative and quantitative demands for education.

The participant observation technique has been used recently to study attitudes toward the local school curriculum (Peshkin, 1977). This study raised a very significant question regarding local control over curriculum. Peshkin found the rural mid-western community which he studied to be very satisfied with a curriculum (and other educational practices) which would be severely criticized by educational experts and perhaps by the majority of American citizens. This issue of whether local communities should be free to dissent from the values of the larger society will have to be decided in the political and judicial arenas, but its significance for curriculum development can be investigated and Peshkin's study provides insight into the way in which the values of a locality operate as frame factors for that process.

9. Curriculum development process. Other researchers have carried out their studies by working closely over prolonged periods of time with curriculum developers in schools. Dienes and Connelly (ca. 1973) reported on the progress of a science curriculum group in Ontario, and Frymier and his associates have recently (1977) published a detailed curriculum classification system which they developed with teachers at the Annehurst elementary school in Ohio. Walker (1971) analyzed the discourse of three groups of curriculum developers on the basis of episodes and deliberative moves. In Australia, Hegarty (1977) investigated the use of the "Nominal Group Technique," a sort of group Delphi method, in the problem identification phase of curriculum development.

10. Curriculum structure. To some extent, in one way or another, all of the foregoing kinds of inquiry address problems of curriculum selection, priorities, and justification. There is an entirely different line of curriculum inquiry that is concerned with the structuring of that which is selected, particularly its ordering. Although this problem is more amenable to empirical investigation than selection is, much of the writing consists of theoretical analyses and literature reviews. The most recent of these is the lead article in the current (Summer, 1977) issue of the American Educational Research Journal in which Cotton, Gallagher, and Marshall discuss alternative structural relationships, learning routes, and evidence of task hierarchies. Another broader review of content sequencing by Posner and Strike appeared last year (1976) in the Review of Educational Research.

Of the two possible approaches to heirarchy validation identified by Cotton and his associates, namely, the psychometric and the experimental, only the former seems to have actually been attempted by researchers. The amount of experimentation needed to validate even a very limited hierarchy would be enormous, but someone ought at least do enough experimentation to test the validity of the psychometric approach.

Most of the psychometric work stems from the design developed by Gagné during the 1960's beginning with Gagné and Paradise (1961), although White (1973) offered an alternative model in his review and has addressed the question that seems to be the main concern in this type of research, namely, what index and statistical test is most suitable for validating hierarchical dependence (White and Clark, 1973).

Soulsby (1975) has criticized Gagne's hierarchical theory of learning for its emphasis on prerequisite relationships among highly specific learning outcomes,

rather than an affective and higher cognitive ones. In a two-page rejoinder, Gagné (1975) noted that "many of the desirable 'higher cognitive' and 'affective' outcomes cannot be achieved unless students have learned basic intellectual skills."

In conclusion, it is evident that, even with a restrictive definition of curriculum, the scholarly activity in the field is extremely diverse. For all the activity, however, we still have very little in the way of a validated knowledge base for curriculum selection and organization. Perhaps we could make greater progress toward a sound theoretical foundation if we diverted some of our scholarly energies away from metatheoretical discussions, ideological polemics, and medical bulletins regarding the health of the field.

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